

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write to request that the phase four COVID-19 bill include funding to keep medical staff on the front lines serving COVID-19 patients. This includes funding to front-line health care facilities or states to temporarily hire volunteer health care workers and to cover out-of-pocket COVID-19 medical costs for all front-line health care workers. Additionally, we ask that hospitals and other front-line responders receive funds to offer bonus pay, prevent layoffs of health care workers and cover additional costs associated with contracting the virus.

Throughout the country, Governors are calling on retired doctors, medical students and other medical professionals to join the front lines in the fight against COVID-19. Many are answering the call at their own risk and without compensation. Due to limited resources, the New York City Medical Reserve Corps does not offer payment for services or other benefits if health workers get sick.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the Illinois Healthcare Professional Emergency Volunteer Program is still determining how it should provide compensation to volunteer health workers.<sup>2</sup>

As we commend the selflessness of front-line health workers and first responders who serve without compensation, the federal government must do more to support their needs, show appreciation for their sacrifice and recruit additional medical providers to join their ranks. We request that any phase four COVID-19 package include funding to help health care facilities or states temporarily hire and cover out-of-pocket COVID-19 medical costs for volunteer front-line health care workers.

Additionally, we request that hospitals and other first responders be provided funds to offer bonus pay and cover the out-of-pocket medical costs—as well as other costs not accommodated by their insurance plan—for permanent front-line medical workers. As doctors, nurses and other medical professionals work around the clock to serve others—while putting themselves at risk—hospitals and other medical facilities should have the resources to offer such benefits to these

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/emergency-prep/mrc-faq.page>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.illinoishelps.net/faq.php>

essential employees. Further, these funds should be used to provide access to free, regular testing for the virus and to ensure hospitals and other health care facilities have a reliable supply of personal protective equipment for staff to make their health status a top priority and to prevent further spread of the disease.

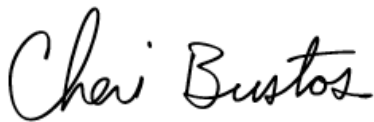
Finally, more must be done to prevent layoffs at hospitals, health centers, physician practices and more. Medical workers are being laid off or furloughed across the county due to lost revenue from widespread cancellations of non-emergency medical appointments and procedures. As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,<sup>3</sup> the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services<sup>4</sup> and the Surgeon General<sup>5</sup> have advised that medical facilities cancel elective procedures and some states have ordered postponements. This has led to cash flow problem for many hospitals and other healthcare facilities as they prepare to treat COVID-19 patients.

According to a recent *USA Today* article,<sup>6</sup> workers impacted range from “dentists and general surgeons to medical assistants and nurses, from allergists and dermatologists to primary care physicians and pediatricians.” Examples include Boston Medical Center who announced that it is furloughing 700 employees, Appalachian Regional Healthcare in Kentucky who furloughed 500 staff members and Cape Fear Valley Health in North Carolina who furloughed 300 employees.

While we applaud the inclusion of the \$100 billion Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund in the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* to support hospitals, physicians and other health care providers, additional resources will be needed to keep essential health care workers and first responders on the front lines during this pandemic. We ask that the next funding package dedicate additional resources to help offset the expenses associated with maintaining a strong, safe health care workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheri Bustos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-releases-recommendations-adult-elective-surgeries-non-essential-medical-surgical-and-dental>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/14/surgeon-general-elective-surgeries-coronavirus-129405>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/04/02/coronavirus-pandemic-jobs-us-health-care-workers-furloughed-laid-off/5102320002/>

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